THE

AERONAUT.

No 21. October 1. 1816...

> —— The human fabric, from the birth,
> Imbibes a flavor of its parent earth:
> As various tracts enpree a various toil,
> The manners speak the idiom of their soil.
>
> GRAY, FRAGM. ON GOV.

One of the great causes of the essential difference of manners, habits, and customs in different nations may undoubtedly be found in the influence that the scenery of a country has upon its inhabitants. The character of the people may generally speaking be found to correspond in a great measure with the character of the country where they & their forefathers have lived. Their writings & compositions also are seen to partake of the same character, & to adapt themselves to the face & nature of the

scenery where they were written.

In a country which is rugged, and mountainous, abounding in places difficult of access, & dangerous when gained, where the means of subsistence are scanty, or are to be obtained only by unwearied exertion, and where the people are, by the barriers that Nature has erected, separated in a manner from the rest of the world, & as to be totally dependant on themselves for the means & the comforts of life; they will be found a hardy race, capable of enduring great fatigue, of dauntless soul, of independent spirit, whom nothing can tame, and whom superior & overwhelming force alone can subdue. The effects that climate, or the degrees of heat & cold in such a country, may have upon the manners of the people, ought not properly to be considered in this place; but we may be allowed to make a passing remark, that the colder & drearier the country is, the gloomier, the wilder, & the

more sublime, if we may so express it, will be the character of the inhabitants. Their superstitions will be terrible & appalling; – the cold blasts of winter will come fraught with every malignant daemon; the caverns & precipices will re-echo the cries of unseen spirits; the streams & rivers be the habitation of beings whose sole delight consists in luring the traveller to destruction. Their wars will be conducted with a courage, & often with a ferocity, which strikes terror into the invaders of their land, or the victim of their conquests.

"An Iron race the mountain-cliffs maintain,
Foes to the gentler genius of the plain;
For where unwearied sinews must be found
With side-long plough to quell the flinty ground,
To turn the torrents swift descending flood,
To brave the savage rushing from the wood,
What wonder if, to patient valor trained,
They guard with spirit what by strength they gained?
And while their rocky ramparts round they see,

The rough abode of want and liberty,
(As lawless force from confidence will grow,)
Insult the plenty of the vales below." GRAY.

On the other hand, in countries, where every thing conduces to the comfort & convenience of man, where the skies are ever serene, the seasons ever fair, we must expect to behold the inhabitants fond of the fine arts, prone to luxurious ease & indolence mild in their spirit, too submissive to the will of despot, and indeed, the very reverse of those we have last described.

We are not however, to suppose, that mankind may be divided into these two classes. Other circumstances, totally unconnected with the scenery of a country, have often given a tone to the feelings of the natives, which their scenery never could have inspired. But undoubtedly, as a general principle, the characteristic features of different nations owe a great deal of their distinguishing marks to the influence of the natural

scenery; and become more hardy & more independent amid inaccessible mountains, and more refined, though they lose much of their independent spirit as they approach to plain, level, & fertile countries, where every thing is dest in beauty, and ~~where every thing is found~~ capable of giving delight as well to the body as the mind.

In the latter countries, the systems of superstition too will be less wild and terrible than in the ~~these~~ former. Extravagant and fanciful as they often are, yet their features contain more beauty and softness of expression. The woods, the verdant hills, the crystal streams, are peopled with no malignant demons; but with a race ~~of kind beings~~ of beings, kind, benevolent, & lovely. Their rites of religion are less bloody, & less terrific; the whole tenor of their manners is more ~~adapted~~ conformable to the arts of peace, than those of their fierce fellow beings, among the wilds and mountains.

Let us now proceed to illustrate our remarks by a few examples. The Genius of ancient Greece, nurtured in a climate the most lovely in the world,

— where every season smiles
Benignant on those blessed isles, —
Which seen from far Colonna's height,
Make glad the heart that hails the sight
And lend to loneliness delight; —
Where, mildly dimpling — ocean's cheek
Reflects the tints of many a peak
Caught by the laughing tides that lave
Those Edens of the Eastern wave, —

burst forth at length from the cloud of barbarism, and gave birth to those lovely strains, which long futurity will never cease to reverence & admire. Their lofty spirit of independence may have proceeded from other incidental causes; but the imagery of their writings, the elegance of their minds, their taste, their elevation, undoubtedly sprung from the influence of their Scenery.

In the same manner, the richness of Eastern scenery had an effect upon the minds of the inhabitants of that country, which is evident in the glowing colors of their literary productions. The

* The influence of mountain scenery on the mind. See the 21st Letter of Nouvelle Heloise.

climate however having an enervating effect upon their bodies, rendered them a luxurious, effeminate people, with no trait of patriotism, and no independent loftiness of soul; so that only a few, whose minds were superior to physical obstacles, were able to draw from the scenery of their countries the decorations of their writings.

To what cause, but the effect of scenery, can we ascribe the bold, wild, & remarkable features of the nations of the north of Europe? The mountains & rocks of Scandinavia & of Sarmatia were the proper cradle of superstition, ferocity, & courage. The deities of the north were dressed in most terrific colors. Their origin, dark, wild, & uncertain, they were to fall at length in a tremendous struggle, and a horrible period to succeed, which the poets termed "the twilight of the Gods."— Order again was to appear smiling above the ruins of the universe, & eternity was destined to the duration of that blissful period.

In the mean time, the followers of Odin on earth, were incited by a religion the true offspring of the rocks & hills, to the most arduous exertions of human courage. They sang their hymn of rejoicing when in the agonies of death, & looked forward with horrid joy to the rewards of their ferocity, amid the halls of Odin. They spread terror all around, and poured down the torrent of devastation over all the South.

The highlanders of Scotland, had the same sublime influence from the scenery upon their minds, but they did not carry it to that length. The wild dreams of a complicated mythology were not mingled with their ideas. But every hill & rock & cataract had its attendant fay; voices were heard in the blast, & echoed from the rock & stream; the spirits of the departed were seen around their late abode, and the seer beheld in the mysterious second-sight, the omens of futurity. The highlanders were were a high minded people, of gallant

spirits, of inflexible honor, ~~sublime~~ & heroic to an extreme. Their productions like those of the more northern nations are full of that grandeur & elevation which betoken lofty souls.

It will also generally be remarked, that the inhabitants of sea-coasts (~~where the sea is the principal part of their scenery~~), are of an enterprising and independent disposition. The Phenicians unfurled their sails in the Mediteranean, & leaping the supposed boundaries of the habitable globe, leaped to islands then unknown to civilized man; nay, some have even gone so far as to suppose, that America itself was discovered by those enterprising mariners.

In addition to the above illustrations, it has been remarked by a writer upon the same subject (~~on which the present paper is written~~) that we may account for the spirit of devastation, & destruction of cities & fields, which the barbarians who invaded the south of Europe manif-

erted, by their being accustomed from their infancy to the contemplation of barren wildernesses, & extensive plains & other scenes, unadorned & unbeautified either by the productions of art and nature; & that the gloomy, melancholy, and unsociable spirit which actuated the ancient Germans, & does at present actuate the North American Indians, may be supposed to proceed from the melancholy & desolate appearance of their country; their poetry or oratory, what little they may possess, & their religion, being also of the same melancholy cast. * He also accounts for the

That great writer, James Harris, in his Philological Inquiries † seems to attribute in part the character of ferocity which prevailed through the Gaily of Europe during the crusades, to the nature of the country. He proceeds to illustrate the idea by endeavoring to account for the features of brutal ferocity which characterized the Indians seen by Byron in the Southern parts of S. America

*An Enquiry concerning the Influence of the Scene of a country on the manners of its inhabitants By W. Falconer, M.D. F.R.S. Read before the Literary & Philos. Society of Manchester.

† Phil. Inq. Part 3. Ch. 14. p. 516 et seq.

by their inhabiting a country shut in by a stormy sea, & a frozen & barren shore, which, "by banishing all pleasing and "benign ideas, filled them with habitual "gloom, & a propensity to be cruel;* — or "might not," he adds, "the tremendous "scenes of Etna have had a like effect "upon the Cyclops, who lived amid smoke, "Thunderings, Eruptions of fire, & Earthquakes? "If we may believe Fazellus,* who wrote "upon Sicily about two hundred years ago, "the Inhabitants near Etna, were in his "time a similar race." —

On the other hand, where none of these dark & strong outlines of nature present themselves, where all is soft, & smooth, & flowery, men become refined in their manners, elegant in their minds; the fine arts flourish, poetry becomes exquisite, (while ~~before~~ in a mountainous country it is rude & unpolished & strong;) the social virtues, the more congenial feelings of the soul, are cultivated; & society, from a horde of barbarians, becomes a communion of rational & sensible beings,

* De Rebus Siculis, L.2. c.4.

linked together by the strongest of mutual ties. In such countries, the progress of civilisation is infinitely more rapid than in others; the minds of the inhabitants are in a manner predisposed to receive it, and only need the concurrence of certain other circumstances among which the Christian religion is the principal, to perfect the work with rapidity. The Greeks & Romans, it may be said were civilised; but if the Christian religion had been introduced among them, how much more rapid would have been their progress!

E.